

City of Miami Beach, 1700 Convention Center Drive, Miami Beach, FL 33139, www.miamibeachfl.gov

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS, Nannette Rodriguez
Tel: 305.673.7010, Fax: 305.673.7229, E-mail: nrodriguez@miamibeachfl.gov

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE March 27, 2014

Surfs Up! Spring Break Camp for Children with Autism is Back – Miami Beach Hosts Various Programs for Special Needs –

Miami Beach, FL – Chances are, you or someone you know has a child with autism. According to the Autism Society, one percent of children in the U.S. ages 3-17 has been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). ASD is a life-long developmental disability that impairs communication, self-control, social interaction and learning.

Miami Beach Parks & Recreation, in conjunction with the University of Miami Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD), hosts a free, week-long spring break surf camp for children with autism. The special camp will run from March 23 - 28 on the beach adjacent to South Pointe Park.

"We are excited to be offering this camp again for the sixth year," said John Rebar, director, Miami Beach Parks and Recreation. "It will provide a unique and wonderful experience that could for some be a once in a lifetime experience."

Parents of special need children are often challenged with limited opportunities for their children to participate in recreational sports. This surf camp provides children ages 8-12 with either low to high functioning autism, pervasive developmental disorder, or Asperger syndrome a chance to surf and be part of a recreational activity like any typical child. Children are selected for the camp by undergoing evaluations with CARD and City of Miami Beach staff to ensure that the camp will be beneficial to the child.

On the first day of camp, participants will be evaluated on their swimming skills as well as receive some surf practice. During the remainder of the week, campers will ride surfboards and kayaks, build sand castles and enjoy the ocean waves. The camp concludes with an awards ceremony and surfing demonstrations for family and friends.

Although dedicated research regarding the benefits of surfing for individuals with autism is scarce, parents and camp instructors can attest to the many positive effects. An increase in self-esteem is one positive result, as is the opportunity to interact with others. Some children who display repetitive behaviors and/or anxiety seem to be calmed by the ocean, which can allow for increased attention and focus. Surfing also provides a fun way to build physical fitness into a child's life and is an activity that can be pursued long term in the form of a hobby or sport.

Parks and Recreation also offers a free, young athletes program to improve basic motor skill development for two to seven year-olds with developmental disabilities on Saturday mornings at the North Shore Park and Youth Center. Additionally, children with disabilities can participate in regularly scheduled recreational activities through their inclusion in recreation program at various city parks and youth centers.

Adults with disabilities can also benefit from an array of city programs including a bowling league, sailing club, social club and Special Olympics athletic training for bowling, soccer and tennis

For additional information on programs for children and adults with special needs, contact the Miami Beach Parks and Recreation Department at 305.673.7730.

###